

VZCZCXR05102
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHML #4877/01 3380922

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 040922Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4144
INFO RUEHZS/ASEAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 004877

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/EX AND EAP/MTS
STATE PASS USAID
STATE PASS USDA/FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAID EAGR CASC SENV SOCI RP

SUBJECT: Typhoon Reming Casualties Over 1000 in Southern Luzon

REF: A) Manila 4544 B) Manila 4241

Summary

¶1. Heavy rains from Typhoon Reming on November 30 caused the massive flow of volcanic debris from the slopes of recently erupted Mount Mayon in the southern Luzon province of Albay. The mudslides buried villages and outlying homes and farms, leaving over 1000 people dead or missing and causing millions of dollars in property damage. At present, there are no reported deaths or injuries of American citizens. President Arroyo declared a "state of natural calamity" and released \$20 million in government funds for relief and rehabilitation. She will visit affected areas on December 5. The Ambassador discussed the tragedy with Philippine Red Cross President Senator Gordon on December 2, expressing U.S. sympathy and support. The Embassy has announced \$250,000 in assistance to World Vision and the Red Cross. The Embassy issued a Warden Notice November 29 and undertook extensive preparations before the typhoon struck. End Summary.

Embassy Preparations and Response

¶2. The Philippines suffered another direct hit from a super-typhoon when Typhoon Reming (international name Durian) struck the island of Luzon on November 30 and brought heavy rains and winds up to 220 kilometers per hour. Embassy learned a typhoon was moving toward the Philippines and issued a Management Notice on November 29 notifying personnel to board doors and windows; check water tanks, radios, and flashlights; stock up on batteries, candles, water, and food; and remove outdoor furniture and objects. Embassy personnel conducted leak tests, filled water tanks, trimmed trees, reserved hotel rooms, and issued guidance on possible Mission closure and the availability of emergency quarters and other support for families facing hardship. Simultaneously with our Management Notice, Embassy issued a Warden Notice on November 29 warning the public that a tropical depression east of the Philippine Islands might develop into a Category 4 strength typhoon within 24 to 48 hours. The Philippine Department of Education closed all schools on Luzon for the following day; international schools announced that evening they would be closed November 30 as well.

Typhoon Reming Triggers Deadly Mudslides

¶3. With forecasters predicting the typhoon would not reach Manila until late evening on November 30, Embassy remained open for business and continued to conduct tests of the telephone tree and warden system, re-issue lists of neighbors to all community wardens,

alert temporary visitors, and hold preparatory meetings. The Embassy, schools, government offices, and banks closed for a local holiday on Friday, December 1. Although the Embassy braced for the full brunt of the typhoon, Manila was spared any serious damage. It became clear over the weekend, however, that the typhoon severely damaged the provinces of Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Albay, Mindoro, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Marinduque, Batangas, and Laguna.

¶ 14. The southern Luzon province of Albay in Region 5 suffered the greatest number of casualties and the most extensive damage. The heavy rains triggered a massive flow of recently deposited ash, mud, and volcanic rock from the slopes of Mount Mayon, which had a minor eruption in July. The lahar buried entire communities and outlying houses and farms surrounding the volcano. Throughout the three-day weekend, Embassy officers and locally-employed staff worked to obtain reports and names of casualties from the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), and checked names against passport records. At present, there appear to be no Amcit victims. Embassy's post-storm assessment determined there was no damage to facilities or infrastructure.

Casualties and Damage

¶ 15. The National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) reported the following casualty and damage estimates as of 6:00 a.m. on Monday, December 4:

Casualties: 425 dead, 507 injured, and 599 missing.

Affected Population: The typhoon affected over a million persons from 1420 communities in the 98 municipalities and nine cities of Regions 4-A, 4-B, and 5. At present, there are over 20,000 evacuees

MANILA 00004877 002 OF 002

in 72 centers.

Damage: The typhoon demolished about 40,000 homes and partially damaged more than 100,000. The NDCC initially estimated \$5 million damage to agriculture, mainly coconut groves and banana trees, and \$500,000 damage to infrastructure, such as roads, power lines, and schools.

Condolences and Pledges of Assistance

¶ 16. The magnitude of the destruction caused by Typhoon Reming did not register immediately. The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) issued an appeal for local and international donations on December 2, two days after the typhoon struck. The PNRC requested basic food and household items and construction materials and set up a bank account to receive monetary donations. As of December 4, the PNRC has received 40,000 euros (\$53,000) from the Netherlands Red Cross, 100,000 Swiss Francs (\$84,000) from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and one million Canadian dollars (\$874,000) from the Canadian Government. The PNRC noted that New Zealand had also pledged assistance.

¶ 17. On December 3, President Arroyo declared a "state of natural calamity" and released \$20 million in government funds for relief and rehabilitation. The Director of NDCC confirmed to JUSMAG representatives at 5:00 p.m. on December 3 that "no requests for international assistance are being considered at this time." The statement from Malacanang Palace thanked those countries offering humanitarian assistance and the following foreign dignitaries for their condolences:

Pope Benedict XVI
Russian President Vladimir Putin
Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf
Heads of foreign ministries of Spain and Canada

¶ 18. Based on the still-emerging casualty counts and destruction

reports, the Philippines is likely to require and request greatly expanded international assistance. The Embassy has announced USG assistance channeled through USAID of \$250,000 -- \$200,000 for World Vision and \$50,000 to the Philippine National Red Cross. USAID is also looking at the possibility of a flight of relief goods from its OFDA regional stockpile. The Ambassador spoke with PNRC President Senator Dick Gordon on December 2 to express sympathy and reassure him of our willingness to support the emergency effort. Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff General Esperon told Ambassador that President Arroyo will visit the typhoon-affected areas on December 5.

Kenney